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COLLEGIATE, CONNECTED AND LIGHTFILLED: A NEW CAMPUS LIBRARY FOR THE 21st CENTURY

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Sydney, Australia: A desire for a library incorporating worlds best practice, designed for the needs of today's students, has produced a stunning new Library on the University of Western Sydney's Penrith (Kingswood) campus, 50 kms west of Sydney's central business district.

Following consent approval prepared by BVN Donovan Hill, the brief evolved further. Allen Jack+Cottier developed the final design, integrating architecture with interiors and graphics to create a cohesive building.

'Perhaps the biggest change in universities over the past few years is the increasing focus on collaboration, social interaction and student welfare as integral to education, coupled with access to technology. So today's libraries are much more social and connected and interactive spaces than they used to be, while also providing places for quiet study.' Said Mark Louw, Director, Allen Jack+Cottier.

The new Library consolidates facilities from two campuses into one new building and accommodates centralized administrative services from five other campus libraries. It provides abundant natural light, spaces for group and private study, placing the traditional book stacks at the heart of the library. It forms the central core around which a network of functional spaces is located.

The building's 'square' plan, informed by the campus master plan, provides a landscaped courtyard to the north. The plan allows for the consolidation of spaces such as bookstacks, reading areas, amenities, meeting rooms and vertical circulation zones to be arranged around a central atrium space.

Within the atrium space the differing functional relationships and the rich layers of collaborative work and study settings are visually and distinctively expressed to ensure intuitive way finding. Day lighting occurs to both sides of the open reading areas and the book stacks which flank it. Furniture and fittings are high quality, tactile, colorful and durable, creating an environment that feels more like a large living room than an institution.

The campus buildings, predominantly built in the late 1970's, are built in red brick. This remained a brief requirement to maintain visual consistency. A textured red brick palette was selected to read as an additional skin applied to the building rather than being anchored to the ground plane. All openings are framed by dark bronze sunscreens responding to the buildings orientation and providing further detail and texture.

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